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SUBJECT: JORDAN: JANUARY 14 MEDIA REACTION TO GAZA

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¶1. SUMMARY: Clashes between Hamas fighters and IDF units competed for attention with King Abdullah's statements in Wednesday's newspapers published in Jordan. The King reiterated again the urgency of enforcing UNSCR 1860 on Israel and subsequently reaching a two-state solution. Demonstrators numbering in the hundreds targeted the Egyptian embassy along with Zionist and American products. Op-ed commentary dismissed Israel's political rationale for the Gaza operation as lacking depth. END SUMMARY.

¶2. All major newspapers kept up their extensive Gaza coverage. Much like yesterday's coverage, news of clashes between IDF units and Hamas fighters competed for space with statements of strength from King Abdullah. Accounts of events in Gaza were sourced to international wire services. The King stated that "the international community should shoulder its responsibilities and place pressure on Israel to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1860 and stop its 'absurd aggression' on the Gaza Strip," and that "the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza cannot be ignored anymore." He added, "Once the aggression ends, there is a need for a serious and active international efforts to solve the conflict on the basis of the two-state solution that leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state." The King made the statements during a meeting with Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim in Amman.

¶3. Dailies gave front-page attention to a denial by a military spokesman of the claim yesterday by the Israeli Army that shots were fired from Jordan on an army patrol near the border. The spokesman said, "No firing took place from Jordanian territory in the direction of an Israeli patrol. The reported information is totally unfounded."

¶4. Following a cabinet meeting, Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications Nasser Joudeh stressed that Jordan "supports Arab consensus and joint Arab action" in reference to Jordan's position on holding an Arab League summit as proposed by Qatar. He explained, "It [Jordan] would support Arab consensus, in case it is achieved, on the Arab summit."

¶5. According to the newspapers, yesterday's public protests included a sit-in by "hundreds" of demonstrators in front of the Egyptian embassy, led by members of the Islamist community. They called for rejecting Egypt's efforts to mediate a ceasefire. In a separate protest, "hundreds" demonstrated in Amman's Sweifieh commercial district, demanding a boycott of "Zionist and American" products. All papers covered the dispatch of thirteen trucks full of relief supplies under the supervision of the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization. In addition, 20 Jordanian physicians headed for Gaza yesterday to volunteer in medical relief efforts there.

¶6. Editorial Commentary

-- "A Recipe for Extremism with No Need for Bin Laden"

Columnist Mohammad Barhoumeh in the January 14 edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad comments, "The Israeli behavior before us constitutes the best recipe for extremism. There is no

need here for a message from Osama Bin Laden or Ayman Al-Thawahiri to stir us against any rationality in the context of our struggle with the other or with the occupier.... We may say a great deal about Hamas' miscalculations and that it gave Israel justifications to practice its sadism against the Palestinians, but all this does not justify in any shape or form accepting the massacre and equalizing between the victim and the victimizer. All of Hamas and Fatah's mistakes must not make us and the world forget that the cause of the Palestinians' misery is essentially the occupation, which does not mean that we exempt ourselves from responsibility for our deteriorating conditions and our division, and that our cause is just although we fail most of the time in defending it. The important question in these difficult times is this: does the ugliness of the Israeli aggression and barbarism constitute a reason for us to abandon good sense? Raising morale and spirits must not make us forget that the Palestinian dream is one of liberation and independence and not one of death and demise. The Palestinian dream is to live in a regular homeland. The Palestinians, like all other people, want to live and not to die.... The real defeat would be if we no longer how dear our blood is."

-- "Israel's Failure!"

Columnist Mohammad Hussein Al-Momani in today's Al-Ghad (1/14) opines, "Political follow-up of the war confirms that the Israeli decision [to go to war] lacks any in-depth political and strategic calculations.... I doubt that Israel's decision was put to reason. Israel began by declaring that the purpose of this operation is to eliminate Hamas. This reminded us of the mentality of the war on terrorism and Al-Qaeda, which is an open-ended and continuous war. This is because Hamas constitutes the 'idea' for resistance; it will not die except with the death of everyone who believes in Palestine as a homeland and in resistance as a methodology.... The result is that Israel until now is incapable of specifying a political and military objective for its war on Gaza, resulting in increased

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international impatience for what is happening, and ultimately leading international and internal pressures to end the war. This is impossible, because as long as there is a single Palestinian able to launch a rocket, it will be failure for Israel and victory for Hamas.... This painful war will not end except with a political and not a military settlement."

-- "Deputies and Obama's Inauguration"

Columnist Sameeh Al-Ma'aitah in today's Al-Ghad (1/14) observes, "On Friday, a large parliamentary delegation will leave to the United States to take part in the inaugural ceremony of the new American president, Barack Obama. The more important aspect is political and administrative. The deputies are the people's representative, and the current political stage, in terms of the Zionist aggression and the American bias, requires a different parliamentary position. We are not talking about boycotting America, but rather about a parliamentary decision to limit the participation.... Since the issue is about celebrations and in Washington, let the delegation be of two members only."

BEECROFT